

REMARKS

The present application was filed on December 7, 2000 with claims 1-20. In the outstanding Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 1-20 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,446,136 to Pohlmann et al. (hereinafter "Pohlmann") in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,477,575 to Koeppel et al. (hereinafter "Koeppel").

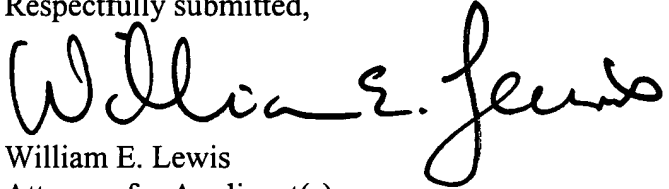
In this response, Applicants: (i) amend the specification to correct some typographical errors; and (ii) traverse the §103(a) rejections of claims 1-20 based on at least the following reasons.

The rejected claims stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) by reference to a combination of references comprising Koeppel. Without characterizing the Koeppel reference, Applicants submit herewith an Affidavit Under 37 C.F.R. §1.131. The Affidavit and its associated exhibits evidence the conception of an invention falling within the scope of one or more of the claims of the present application at least as early as August 2000. Moreover, the Affidavit proves diligence in drafting and filing the application since that date. In comparison, the Koeppel reference has an effective filing date of September 12, 2000. The Koeppel reference is, therefore, not prior art under §103(a) with respect to the present invention.

Applicants note that, despite diligent effort by Applicants' attorney, Mr. William E. Lewis, inventor David A. Rabenhorst could not be located in order to obtain his signature on the §1.131 Affidavit. Mr. Rabenhorst is no longer employed by the assignee of the present invention, International Business Machines (IBM). Moreover, Mr. Rabenhorst's co-inventors and last-known manager while employed at IBM are not aware of his present employer or address. Applicants, therefore, respectfully request that the Affidavit be accepted in its present form in light of Mr. Rabenhorst's unavailability.

Applicants continue to submit that claims 1-20 are in condition for allowance. Withdrawal of the §103(a) rejection with respect to all claims is respectfully solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "William E. Lewis". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "William" being the most prominent part.

Date: September 23, 2004

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